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ABSTRACT

This article describes a model developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children and Youth, Bureau of Child Development Programs for the evaluation of its child day care programs. The evaluation effort has two phases. The first phase, the Child Development Program Evaluation (CDPE) was designed to provide a standardized system for the assessment of 16 components of the day care delivery system. Three instruments were produced to assess compliance with federal requirements, state standards and professional recommendations. The second phase, the Ecological Paradigm for the Delivery and Assessment of Child Care (ECOPAD), is designed to provide the accountability needed in the Bureau of Child Development Programs. The emphasis of this model is to integrate data across three component areas: program services, statistical reporting and fiscal costs. Use of the CDPE and ECOPAD in combination is thought to provide a relatively objective evaluation of the total impact and cost of a social services program. (Author/RH)

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MAKING THE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE--POSSIBLE --

EVALUATION OF HUMAN SERVICES

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Social services programs account for a significant portion of tax revenues collected at the federal, state and local levels of government. For example, in Pennsylvania over 80 million dollars is spent on child day care alone. The total State welfare budget for fiscal year 79-80 is 3.2 billion dollars. For this reason there is a lot of legitimate concern as to whether social service programs do what they are expected to do.

It seems as if it would be an easy goal for social service administrators, policy and program staff to achieve, but it has, and continues to be, very difficult; especially when attempting to assess and integrate the fiscal, statistical and programmatic components of the programs. The statistical and fiscal aspects are relatively less difficult to assess because of their quantitative nature. The programmatic aspects are the most difficult components to assess because of the many and complex variables involved in service delivery and because legislation, policy and standards governing programs tend to be written in general terms, making it possible to interpret what is expected in many different ways.

This article describes a model developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children and Youth, Bureau of Child Development Programs for the evaluation of its child day care programs which includes the fiscal, statistical and programmatic components of day care programs. It is currently a manual system, but could be computerized. Plans are now underway to use the model for other programs within the Office of Children and Youth and it is felt that the model is flexible enough to be used by other states. The name of the model is Ecological Paradigm for the Delivery and Assessment of Child Care (ECOPAD). The Child Development Program Evaluation is the name of the project (CDPE).

Purpose of the Child Development Program Evaluation (CDPE) Project

The general purpose of the CDPE project is to improve the quality of care for children in day care in the State of Pennsylvania.

The specific goals are to:

(1) Design a set of tools suitable for use statewide by day care staff to license, monitor and evaluate child day care programs.

(2) Design a system for the integration of fiscal, statistical and programmatic information to provide management and supervisory staff with as objective decision-making information as possible.

(3) Be able to assure families that child day care service providers are in compliance with minimum standards applicable to the service they are getting.

(4) Improve the State's ability to provide technical assistance to providers of child day care.

(5) Improve the State's ability to assess and provide training for child care providers.

Background

Historically, in Pennsylvania as in most other states, when a child is placed in the care of someone other than a parent, there is concern that the child's right to be well taken care of is at risk. This concern has resulted in the development of regulations/standards to protect children cared for by persons other than their parents.

Pennsylvania's child day care service programs have been subject to minimum licensure standards for many years. However, the interpretation and enforcement of these standards varied because there was no standard way of assessing whether providers were or were not in compliance with them. Each person responsible for

determining whether a provider did or did not meet the standards could and often would interpret some standards differently. Therefore, it was not only desirable but essential for the project to design a standardized system for the assessment of every component of the day care delivery system.

This part of the project, designing and field testing of the CDPE, took almost three years (1976-1979) and involved all levels of governmental staff, providers and consumers.

CDPE Design

The CDPE consists of three programmatic instruments. One instrument is used to determine a program's compliance with State day care standards; one is designed to determine a program's compliance with federal day care requirements; and one is designed to measure a program's compliance with the recommendations of nationally recognized child care advocacy professional organizations. The instruments are to be used on a site-specific basis and are designed to be administered separately and according to whether a program is subject to state only or state and federal regulations. The general nature of some State and federal regulations made it necessary to develop standard criteria for the measurement of a program's compliance with the intent of the regulation. Similarly, criteria for measurement of a program's compliance with recommendations of nationally recognized child care advocacy professional organizations (the evaluation instrument) had to be developed. Information is gathered by observation, record review or interview.

The CDPE addresses 16 key component areas of child day care. These areas include: 1) administration; 2) environmental safety; 3) first aid; 4) nutrition; 5) emergency preparedness; 6) transportation; 7) training; 8) record processing; 9) record content; 10) dental health; 11) staff health; 12) health services; 13) child development; 14) special needs; 15) social services; 16) parent involvement.

Results

The implementation of the CDPE has resulted in a significant increase in the day care services programs' compliance with regulatory standards, the upgrading of some services and the avoidance of regulatory confrontations with some programs. (See Figure 1)

Insert Figure 1

Figure 1 depicts the level of non-compliance in all child care programs in the State of Pennsylvania that had been evaluated as of July, 1979. As is clearly indicated, the level of non-compliance has dropped significantly during the 18-month period (January, 1978 - July, 1979) in which the project was operating. In other words, child care programs went from an overall compliance level with State and federal regulations of 78% to 97% during this period. This is an increase of practically 20% in less than a two year period.

The Model

Ecopad (Ecological Paradigm for the Delivery and Assessment of Child Care) is the model (system) designed to provide the accountability needed in the Bureau of Child Development Programs. The emphasis of this model is to integrate data across three component areas: program (services); statistical (reporting); and fiscal. Figure 2 presents the model in a schematic fashion. Ecopad constitutes the technology built to manage the data being collected on child care programs. The model (Ecopad) draws heavily from two sources: 1) research being conducted in the human ecology domain;[1] and 2) research being conducted on management information systems[2].

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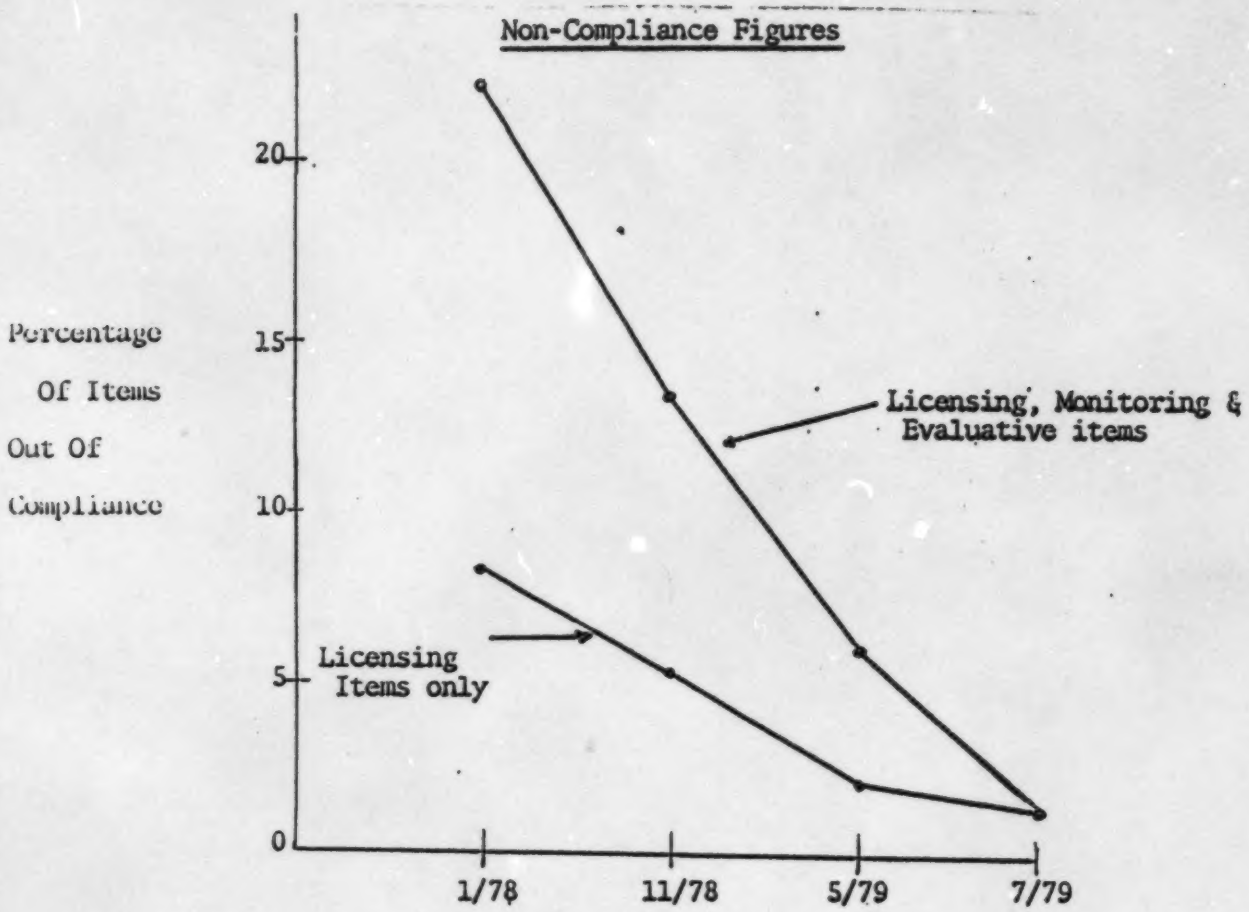
[1] Bronfenbrenner, U. Toward an Experimental Ecology of Human Development, American Psychologist, July, 1977, pps. 513-531.

[2] REAP Associates, Integrated Management Model, 1979.

Figure 1


Non-Compliance Figures
Percentage Of Items Out Of Compliance
20
15
10
5
0
Licensing, Monitoring & Evaluative items
Licensing Items only
1/78
11/78
5/79
7/79

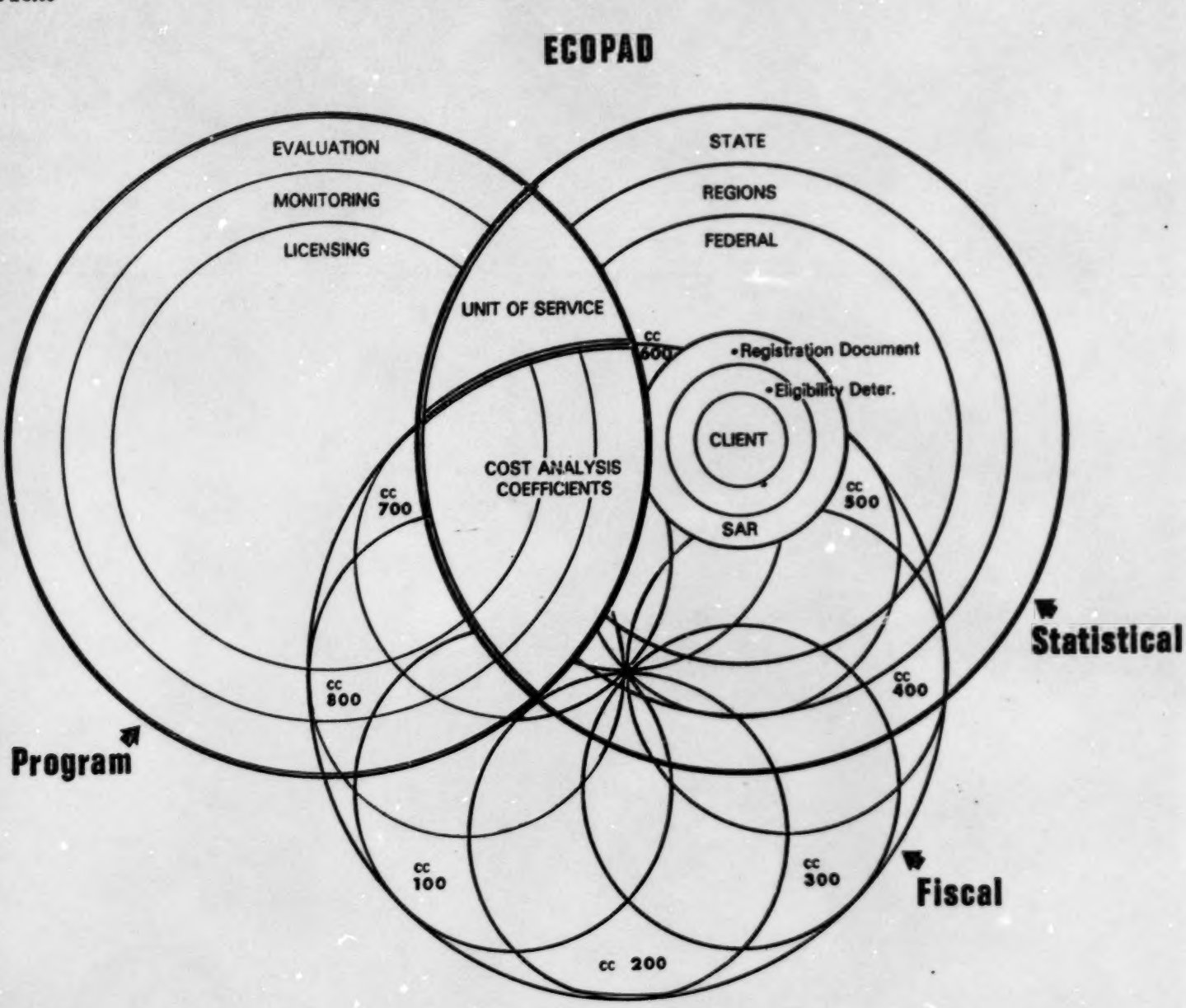
Insert Figure 2

Generally, research conducted on child care programs and children has been completed in a vacuum, assessing child care on one variable without looking at what other intervening variables might impact a child care program. With Ecopad, an attempt is made to assess a child care program's effect on children from various perspectives, such as: what impact do various communities have on the day care program, what effect does day care have on the behavior of the child at home, does day care affect the responsiveness of children to adults, how does day care affect the family as a childrearing institution, etc.

Also, when management information systems have been designed there has been a great deal of emphasis placed on the fiscal and reporting components to determine cost analysis coefficients with little emphasis placed upon the programmatic component. Ecopad attempts to assess this area in detail.

Let's now turn our attention to the schematic of Ecopad and describe in detail how the model works. The first component is the reporting or statistical component. The first contact with a client would be made here and would probably be recorded through an intake or eligibility document. The agency would need to assess if the client is eligible for services. In the case of day care services, it would be Title XX eligibility. Once this is accomplished, an intake document is then completed, in order to obtain all the other demographic data on the client. With the Ecopad model the eligibility and intake are the same document called "Registration for Child Day Care Services". This is depicted in Figure 3 by the first two concentric circles. Information regarding the type of service requested, number of family members in the household, age of client, hours of care, days of

Figure 2



Ecological Paradigm for the Delivery of Child Care

care, income level, etc. is collected on the client. This registration document is filled out at the initial intake and then every six months thereafter.

Insert Figure 3

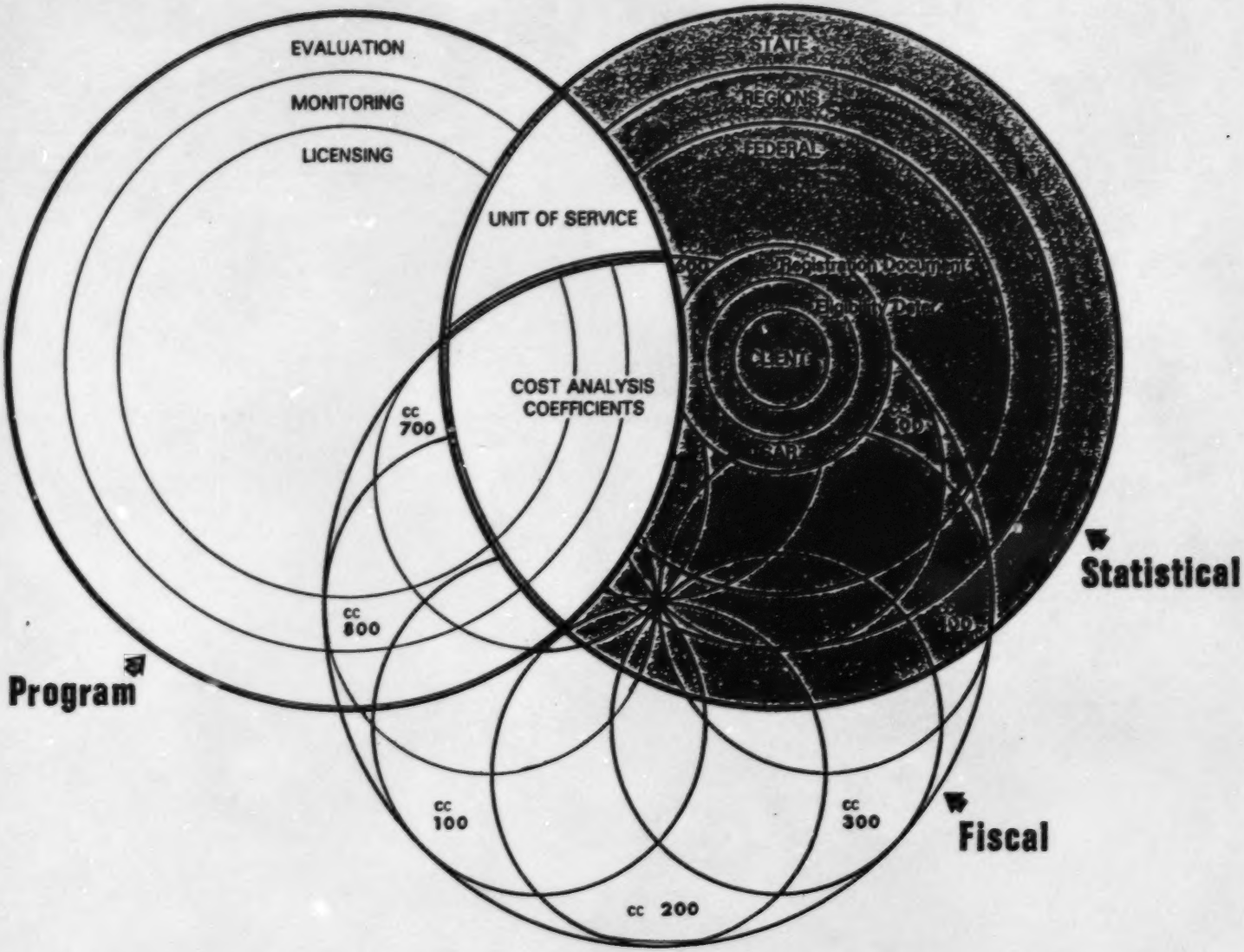
The next concentric circle involves the monthly reporting form called the "SAR" (Service Activity Report). This form documents the services provided on a monthly base to the client. This form along with the registration document composes the reporting system for Ecopad. From these two documents all Title XX reporting requirements for day care are answered. Reports are also prepared for the State and the regions on all demographics for our clients within the day care Title XX system.

The next component to be considered is the fiscal component. This component is broken into eight cost centers (CC100, CC200, ... CC800). Each cost center is for a specific program area: CC100 pays for the administration and management of program, legal and accounting, office operations, staff development and travel and fringe benefits for all employees. Cost center 200 pays for the plant and maintenance of the facility which includes rent, utilities, insurance, custodial services. Cost center 300 pays for child care which includes all teaching staff. Cost center 400 pays for food preparation and service. Cost center 500 pays for all social services, including items such as parental participation. Cost center 600 pays for the transportation of children to and from the center, field trips, etc. Cost center 700 pays for examinations and health care of the children. Cost center 800 pays for purchased slots in other programs who subcontract with the agency.

Insert Figure 4

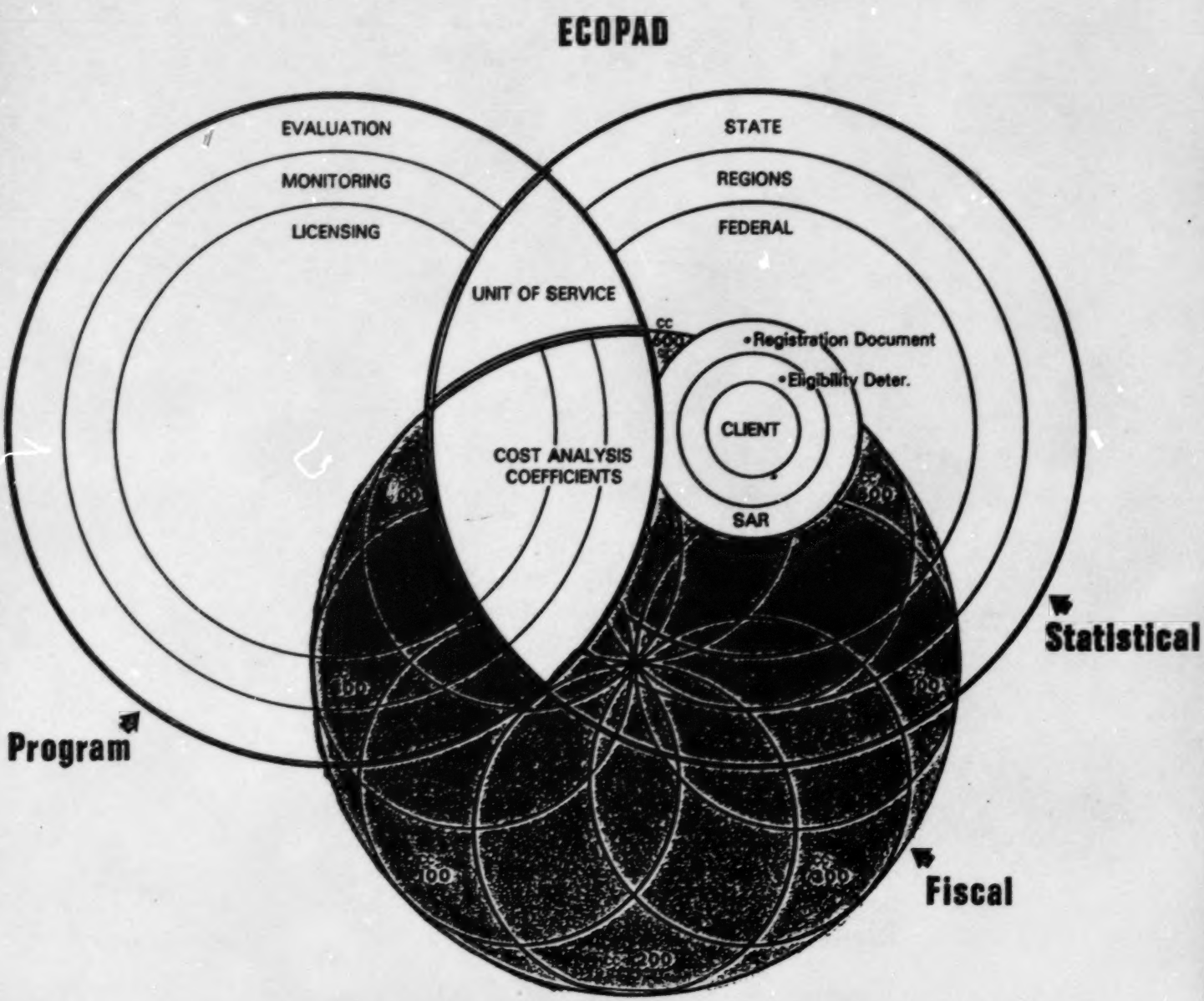
Figure 3

ECOPAD



Ecological Paradigm for the Delivery of Child Care

Figure 4



Ecological Paradigm for the Delivery of Child Care

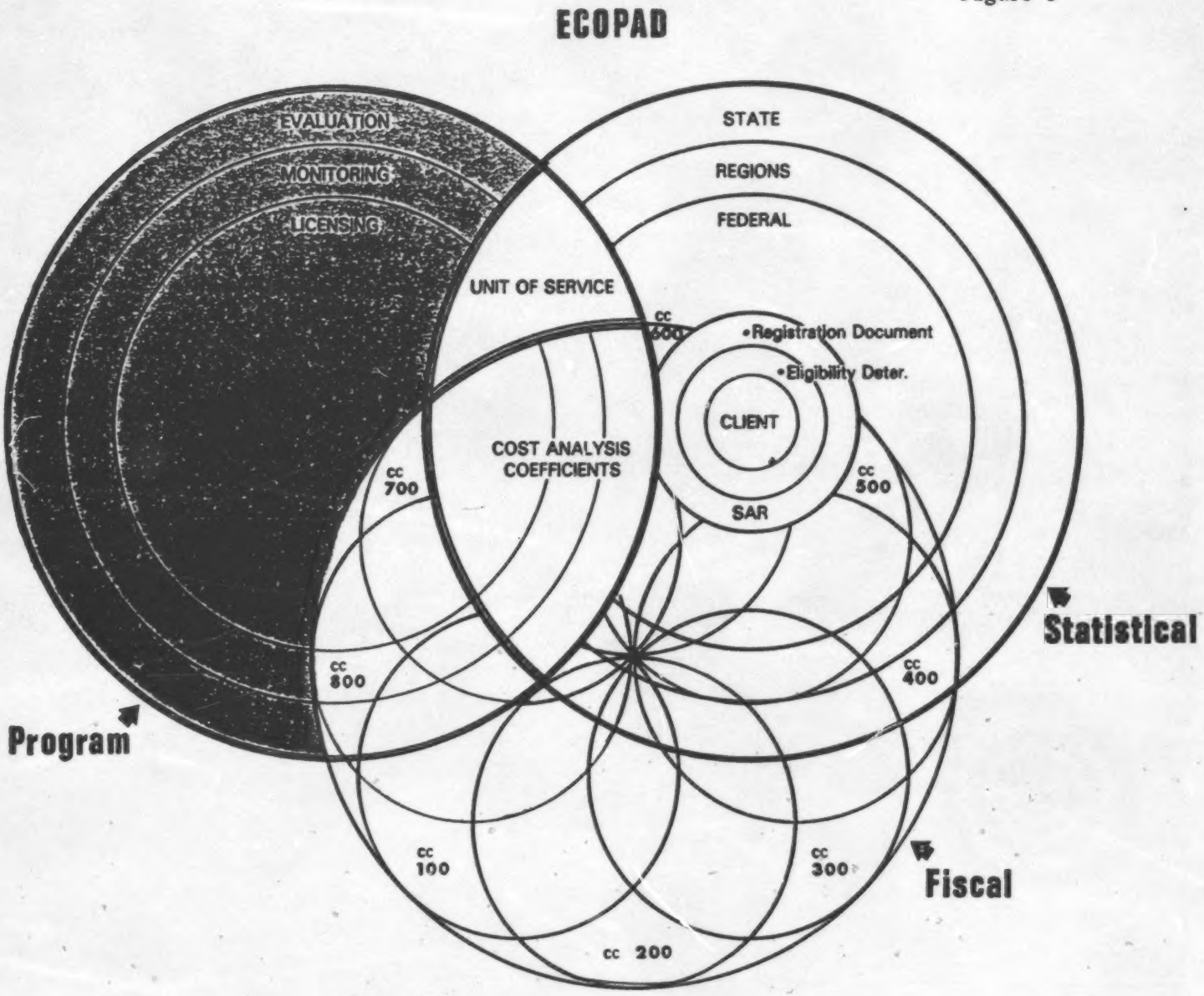
All of the above fiscal information is reported on a monthly invoice form for payment. This information is then matched with the units of service provided from the reporting (statistical) component. From these data a cost per child can be determined. However, the last component involving the program component must be included in order to determine the cost analysis coefficient or cost benefit ratio. We feel very strongly that by using data from just the reporting and fiscal components, only spurious cost analysis coefficients are obtained regarding the overall quality of a program.

This last component, program, is the most difficult to ascertain because it assesses the level of human service delivery which is elusive and difficult to objectively measure. However, it is in this area that the Child Development Program Evaluation Project (CDPE) has been helpful. The instruments, interviews and questionnaires developed are collectively known as the CDPE. These questionnaires assess the program component of day care at three levels: 1) licensing level; 2) monitoring level; and 3) evaluative or quality level. (See Figure 5) Within each of these levels the CDPE instruments and questionnaires assess seven major areas within a day care program: administration, environmental safety, child development, nutrition, social services, transportation and health.

Insert Figure 5

Each of these areas have items that measure compliance with State regulations, federal regulations or definitive research in the field of child development. Each item has a weight assigned to it and will only be reported if the item is found out of compliance. All of these items are then added to come up with a total score that reflects compliance level. These data are then put into an equation with the reporting data and the fiscal data to come up with the cost analysis coefficient.

Figure 5



Ecological Paradigm for the Delivery of Child Care

(See Figure 6) Also these program data can be interfaced with only the reporting data to produce the unit of service. (See Figure 7)

Insert Figures 6 & 7

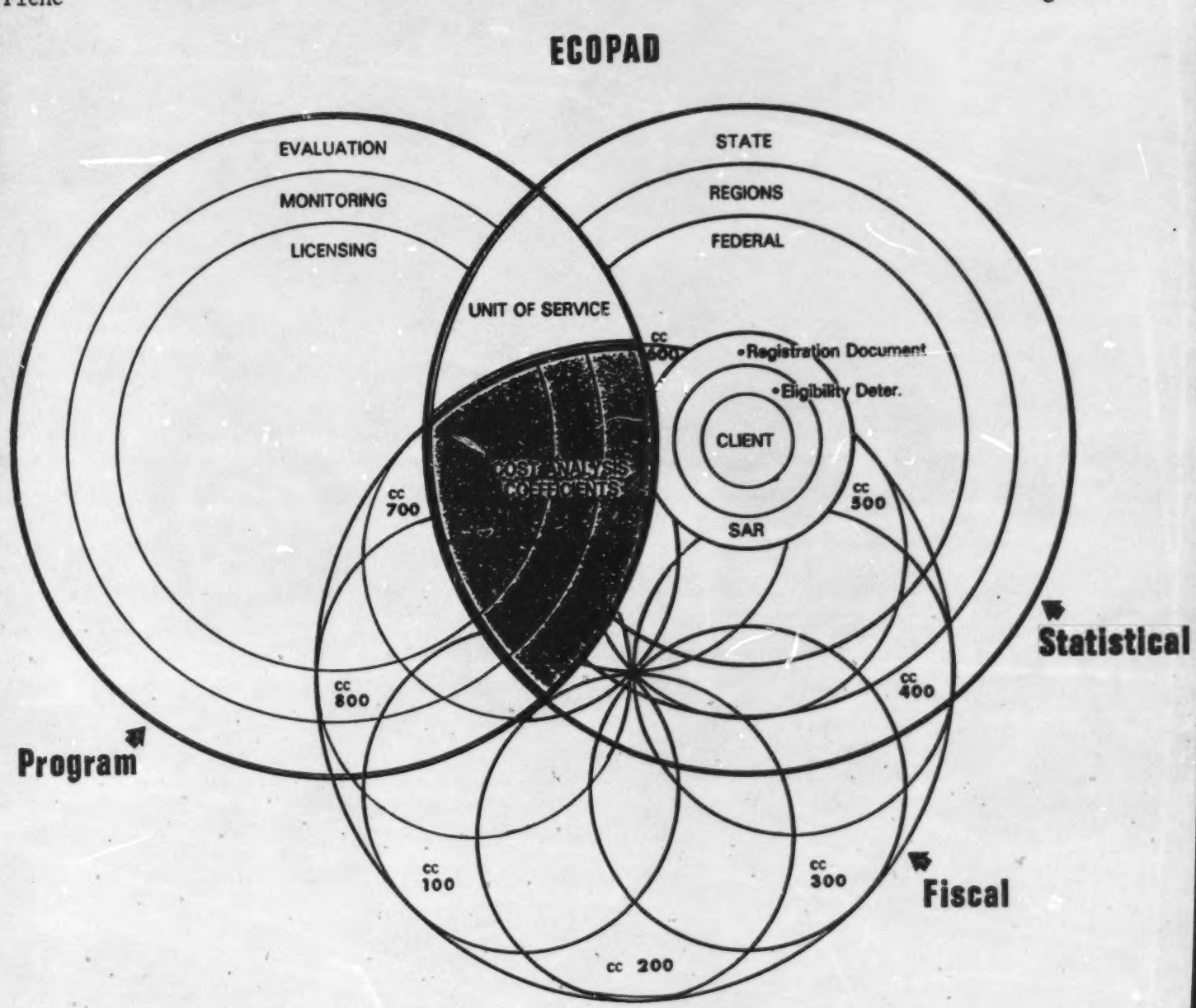
The above constitutes the basic structure of the Ecopad model. The unique piece to this model is the program component. All management information systems contain the fiscal and reporting components and, to a lesser extent, the program component; but not in the level of detail that is present in Ecopad. The other unique aspect of Ecopad is its generalizability to other service delivery systems.

Conclusion

The key to comprehensive evaluation of social service programs is to develop criteria for the standardized assessment of the programmatic components of the services. This includes state, local and/or federal regulations, legislative mandates and professional goals and objectives. The CDPE project has demonstrated that this task can be accomplished in the program area of child day care. We feel that the design can be used for the comprehensive evaluation of most, if not all, social service programs on a state, local or national level. For example, the instruments have been used to measure the 1968 Federal Interagency Day Care Requirements; the instruments can be modified to assess mental health/mental retardation programs and compliance with adult-child ratios can be determined for any social service by using the mathematical models in Ecopad.

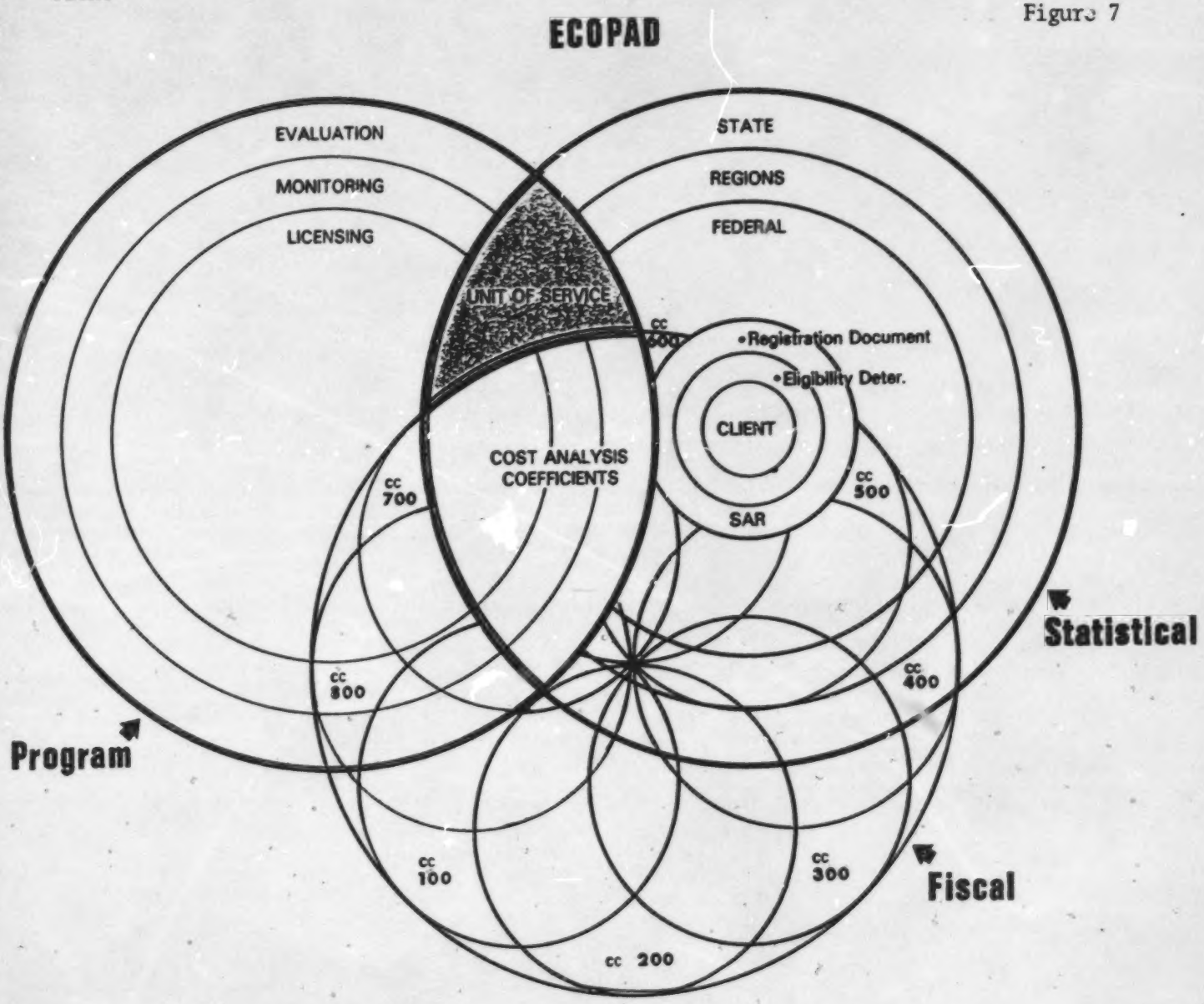
Once the criteria for measuring a program's compliance with a regulation or service intent is established we are one step closer to dealing with the questions of whether social service programs do what they were intended to do. Coordinating the fiscal and statistical components with the programmatic component permits relative objective evaluation of the total impact and cost of a social service

Figure 6



Ecological Paradigm for the Delivery of Child Care

Figure 7



Ecological Paradigm for the Delivery of Child Care

program. Ecopad provides the model for the integration of the programmatic, fiscal and reporting components in both a naturalistic and admininstratively sound manner.

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